



NEWS RELEASE

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Day Care Centers Targeted to Reduce Antibiotic Resistance Impact

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education (AWARE) launched its 2002/2003 education campaign today stating it will focus this year's efforts to educate day care providers and their young patrons. Antibiotic use is highest in children with one of every four (26.75%) antibiotics prescribed in 2001 going to children under six years of age, according to a recent Intermountain Health Care study.

Antibiotic resistance awareness continues to be AWARE's key message to the public and health care providers. Resistant bacteria are germs that are not killed by usual doses of antibiotics and emerge because of antibiotic misuse or overuse. "Taking antibiotics when they aren't needed can be harmful to your health," says Kim Bateman, M.D., AWARE member and antibiotic resistance researcher. "Antibiotic resistance is a serious problem that could affect us for generations to come."

There are some good signs, however, that physicians and the general public are taking this crisis seriously. Antibiotic use has been declining since the 2000-2001 cold and flu season, but not as drastically as during last year's AWARE campaign. "We have seen a significant reduction in antibiotic use throughout the state since we launched our campaign last winter," says H. Eric Cannon, PharmD, a pharmacist and Chairman of Utah AWARE. "In fact, before the kick off there was a statewide reduction of 3.97 percent, while after the campaign the reduction in antibiotic use rose to 7.26 percent."

Utah AWARE attributes the decrease to increased public awareness and to physicians who avoid prescribing antibiotics for inappropriate uses, such as viral infections like the cold and flu.

This year AWARE hopes to further its goals through various education efforts, including working with day care centers emphasizing hand washing. "Hand washing is an important life skill to teach children to reduce

- MORE -

Page 2 of 3 — Day Care Centers Targeted to Reduce Antibiotic Resistance Impact

the spread of colds, influenza, and other viruses, for which antibiotics are useless,” says Jamee Carter, licensed day care provider in Salt Lake City. Each year licensed family and center day care providers must complete 20 hours of continuing education to obtain or maintain licenses. Hand washing is one of three required components that Utah AWARE is authorized to teach.

“We are helping to debunk myths about antibiotics and common viral infections like the cold and flu,” says Bob Bunnell, PA, a local Physician’s Assistant who trains day care providers and will help spearhead Utah AWARE’s efforts this year. “It is wonderful to watch parents and providers as they understand the dangers of antibiotic overuse and the devastating impact it could have on the future spread of disease. Parents are the first line of defense in combating this worldwide crisis. It’s so important to teach children, parents and providers that antibiotics are powerful medicines that must be used carefully.”

“There may be a misconception among the public and some day care providers that antibiotic treatment is required before a sick child can return to day care and that is not always the case,” says Deb Wynkoop, director of UDOH’s Bureau of Licensing. State guidelines do not require that any sick child first receive a regimen of antibiotics before returning to the center, only when it is medically appropriate. There are some illnesses that do require antibiotic for treatment such as strep throat.

Utah AWARE is a coalition of health care providers, insurers, pharmaceutical manufacturers, the Utah Medical Association (UMA), and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) that have joined forces to educate the public about the alarming increase of antibiotic resistance in Utah.

Last year AWARE distributed posters and pamphlets to health clinics throughout the state and also aired radio ads featuring Dick Van Dyke and Bill Nye: The Science Guy. This year AWARE will have more radio spots and billboards along I-15 with key messages, including the radio slogan ‘*Use the Right Drug for the Right Bug!*’” Day care providers will also receive educational lesson plans and coloring books.

AWARE suggests the following to prevent antibiotic-resistant infections:

- Do not take antibiotics for viral infections like the cold or the flu.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about antibiotic resistance.
- Ask whether an antibiotic will help improve your illness.
- Use over-the-counter medicines like decongestants, cough-syrups, and pain relievers to reduce symptoms.
- Do not save antibiotics for the next time you get sick – complete the entire course as directed.
- Do not share antibiotics or use an antibiotic that is prescribed for someone else.

For more information about antibiotic resistance, visit www.utahaware.com